

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4891

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 OECD PARIS 31030

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, OECD

SUBJECT: PROPOSED OECD LABOR MINISTERIAL

1. SUMMARY:; GASS, OECD DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, MANPOWER AND EDUCATION, HAS SUGGESTED THAT MANPOWER AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CONSIDER DESIRABILITY OF A LABOR MINISTERS MEETING IN THE FALL OF 1975 TO DISCUSS UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION. MISSION POINTS OUT SOME POTENTIAL BENEFITS (PARA 6) AND QUESTIONS (PARA 7) THAT SHOULD BE ASSESSED BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER MINISTERIAL SHOULD BE HELD. END SUMMARY.

2. GASS, OECD DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, MANPOWER AND EDUCATION, SAID DURING OPENING SESSION OF DEC. 18-20 MSAC MEETING THAT COMMITTEE SHOULD CONSIDER AND ADVISE HIM ON DESIRABILITY OF A LABOR MINISTERIAL MEETING NEXT YEAR TO DISCUSS UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION. GASS ADDED IF CONSENSUS FAVORED MINISTERIAL,; HE WOULD DISCUSS MATTER WITH SECGEN VAN LENNEP. GASS NOTED AGENDA FOR MINISTERIAL MIGHT BE BASED ON RESULTS OF NEW WORKING PARTY ON EMPLOYMENT SECURITY WHICH MEETS IN MID-FEBRUARY AND IS TO REPORT TO MSAC IN MID-APRIL 1975.

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3. A NUMBER OF DELEGATIONS COMMENTED ON MINISTERIAL PROPOSAL DURING TWO-DAY SESSION. AUSTRALIAN DEL NOTED IT "MIGHT BE HEALTHY EXERCISE TO HELP GOVERNMENTS FOCUS ON PROBLEM; HOWEVER, CAREFUL PREPARATION IS REQUIRED." SWEDEN, JAPAN, SWITZERLAND, AND BELGIUM VOICED SUPPORT OF MINISTERIAL. GREEK DEL INQUIRED IF MSAC WOULD OVERBURDEN OECD WITH TOO MANY MINISTERIALS IN 1975 (I.E., ANNUAL MINISTERIAL COUNCIL USUALLY HELD LATE SPRING AND PROPOSED SCIENCE MINISTERIAL), ADDING THAT "SUCH CONSIDERATIONS DO NOT NEGATE URGENCY OF A LABOR MINISTERS MEETING." FRANCE SUGGESTED THAT RATHER THAN LABOR MINISTERS MEETING, PERHAPS UNEMPLOYMENT COULD BE AGENDA ITEM FOR ANNUAL MINISTERIAL COUNCIL. US DEL DID NOT COMMENT ON PROPOSAL.

4. IN LANGUAGE OF DRAFT CONCLUSIONS, COMMITTEE "REQUESTED SECRETARIAT, AFTER APPROPRIATE CONSULTATIONS WITHIN ORGANIZATION, TO MAKE A SPECIFIC PROPOSAL TO NEXT MEETING CONCERNING POSSIBLE DISCUSSION AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL OF CURRENT EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS IN CONTEXT OF LIKELY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN OECD AREA AND BEYOND IN COMING YEARS."

5. IN CONCLUDING REMARKS (DEC. 19), GASS SAID REPLIES TO QUESTIONNAIRE ON EMPLOYMENT (MS/M/201/474) (DUE FEB. 1), DISCUSSION OF REPLIES AT FEB. 17-19 MEETING OF WP ON EMPLOYMENT SECURITY, AND CONSIDERATION OF WP'S REPORT AT MSAC APRIL 15-17 COULD PROVIDE ADDITIONAL BASES FOR CONSIDERING WHETHER LABOR MINISTERIAL SHOULD BE HELD IN FALL OF 1975. ALTERNATIVELY, UNEMPLOYMENT COULD BE AGENDA ITEM FOR ANNUAL MINISTERIAL COUNCIL.

6. COMMENT: MISSION BELIEVES THERE MIGHT BE CONSIDERABLE VALUE IN HOLDING LABOR MINISTERIAL, BUT ONLY IF THERE IS GOOD PROSPECT THAT RESULTS WOULD HAVE DIRECT BENEFIT TO MEMBER COUNTRIES IN HELPING THEM TO ALLEVIATE PROBLEMS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND TO FUTURE COOPERATION ON EMPLOYMENT AND PERHAPS OTHER MANPOWER QUESTIONS IN THE OECD. MEETING WOULD GIVE LABOR MINISTERS OPPORTUNITIES --BOTH IN OFFICIAL MEETINGS AND (PERHAPS EVEN MORE

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VALUABLE) ON SOCIAL AND OTHER INFORMAL OCCASIONS--TO EXCHANGE IDEAS ON EMPLOYMENT SECURITY POLICIES AND POSSIBLY TO CONSIDER NEW APPROACHES IN USE ELSEWHERE THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL IN THEIR OWN COUNTRIES. MINISTERS MIGHT JOINTLY DECLARE THEIR SUPPORT FOR COOPERATION AMONG OECD MEMBERS IN ECONOMIC POLICIES, EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING EMPLOYMENT SECURITY AND MANPOWER PROBLEMS IN THIS CONTEXT; IN THIS CONNECTION

WE RECALL PORTION OF MARTINIQUE COMMUNIQUE THAT STATES
THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE US AND THE EC "MUST ADOPT
CONSISTENT ECONOMIC POLICIES IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE

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IN AVOIDING UNEMPLOYMENT WHILE FIGHTING INFLATION."
JOINT PUBLIC STATEMENT OF LABOR MINISTERS MIGHT ALSO
HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFIT OF SHOWING RECOGNITION BY
OECD MEMBERS OF PROBLEMS CREATED BY UNEMPLOYMENT AT A
TIME WHEN THIS MAY WELL HAVE BECOME OF ACUTE POLITICAL
CONCERN IN THE OECD AREA.

7. WE ARE NOT SURE, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WOULD BE
SUFFICIENT SUBSTANCE IN ABOVE TO WARRANT BRINGING LABOR
MINISTERS TOGETHER. UNLESS THE MEETING IS PLANNED VERY
THOROUGHLY AND WELL AHEAD OF TIME, THE OUTCOME WILL
REMAIN UNCERTAIN (AS IT DID, FOR INSTANCE, IN THE CASE
OF THE RECENT ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS MEETING). FURTHER-
MORE, QUESTIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT ARE DIFFICULT TO
SEPARATE FROM DEMAND MANAGEMENT POLICIES THAT ARE
GENERALLY BEYOND LABOR MINISTRY RESPONSIBILITIES. ALSO,
THERE ARE DIFFERENCES AMONG OECD MEMBERS THAT MIGHT MAKE

IT IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON ANY SIGNIFICANT
DECLARATION OF POLICY CONCERNING EMPLOYMENT SECURITY.

8. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IT MIGHT BE BEST TO PROCEED
AS GASS HAS SUGGESTED AND NOT TRY TO TAKE FIRM POSITION
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FOR OR AGAINST LABOR MINISTERIAL BEFORE APRIL MEETING
OF MSAC. ANY WASHINGTON REACTIONS OR GUIDANCE WOULD BE
APPRECIATED.
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